

TRADES' UNIONS.

WHEN will the trades' unions waken up to the fact that the war between labourer and capitalist is entering on a new phase? As yet there is little sign of such an awakening. The class struggle is exciting interest and thought among all kinds of people; but strange to say, those whom it should concern most seem to care least about it. Among the rank and file of the unions, it is well known, a feeling of dissatisfaction prevails against the leaders who are mainly responsible for this apathy. If this feeling can be put into words, and some action taken, the sooner it is done the better.

The past work of the unions may be summed up very shortly: they have simply been trying to make their own members as comfortable as possible under the present wage system. Of course, in such a world—or rather, in such a social system—as this, no one can quarrel with a body of men for trying to make themselves comfortable—if they make no pretence of doing more. But the unions pretend to be an army fighting the battle of labour; whereas they are merely an ambulance looking after the sick and wounded.

Grumbling at the past is an easy and a fruitless exercise, in which I am not the least inclined to indulge. Besides, if the unions have been selfish in their action, there are plenty of reasons for it—not good reasons, but forcible, nevertheless. During the last forty years there has been a conspiracy of circumstances which has compelled the unionists into a narrow groove. England's trade was continually expanding; if new machinery lessened the demand for labour on one hand, the growth of trade increased it on the other. The action of the unionists was easily made successful in a rising market. The advancing wave of England's commercial prosperity carried her workmen with it, and gave the unions apparent success; but let them now look to it lest the receding wave pitch them back to the starting-point, and cheat them of the advantages which may still be reaped from their past work.

The question for unionists is, will you continue in your narrow exclusiveness, or will you become a set of organisations representing the whole of the labouring class and working for the general interest of that class? Let me, for instance, take the Amalgamated Engineers (to which I belong). Their motto is "All men are brethren." Now, what does this mean? The words are plain enough; but when did the Society prove itself worthy of its motto? Judging from the spirit of its doings, "All trades' unionists are brethren" would be more suitable. Again, in the preface to our rules we are given to understand that the immediate personal benefits assured by the Society to its members are but smoothing the road "until some more general principle of co-operation shall be acknowledged in society, guaranteeing to every member the full enjoyment of the produce of his labour." Now, in the face of this, is it consistent that the whole efforts of the Society should be devoted to sick-nursing, while the "general principle of co-operation" is left to look after itself? Of the personal benefits we hear continually, but of the ultimate aim of the Society we hear never a word. If any members of the Engineers should read this, I wish them to understand that I have no objection to what the Society is doing, but rather that I think it ought to do something more. What will it profit us if we gain perfection as a friendly society and lose sight of the greater aim of bringing about the acknowledgment of that general principle of co-operation, by which the full enjoyment of the fruits of our labour shall be secured to us, and all men be made truly brethren?

The difficulty is that unionists are untroubled by any fear that their future will be less (pecuniarily) successful than their past. They have imbibed the ideas of those short-sighted economists who confidently predict that the present system of classes will last for ever. Already time is falsifying these "cock-sure" predictions. England's commercial prosperity is ebbing away. There is no increase of trade now to swallow up the hands displaced by machinery. The scene has changed, and the forces that formerly made the ambulance policy successful have reversed action, and will soon make it impracticable. The army of unemployed is growing, and reduction of wages has begun and will go on. If we resist the reductions, manufacturers threaten us with the loss of our foreign trade altogether, and the bankruptcy of the British Empire. Foreign competition is a strange thing, playing queer pranks and abounding in curious paradoxes. When the workmen compete amongst themselves for work they impoverish each other: when capitalists compete among themselves for markets they impoverish—not each other, but each other's workmen. It is like the duel at which Mark Twain was a spectator: the two duellists fired several rounds, and all the bullets hit Twain. Thus it is with the fight between capitalists for profits: right valiantly they do all the firing, while the workmen have to do the suffering. Indeed, the workmen are rather worse off than Mark Twain, because he at least hadn't to supply the ammunition.

The remorseless logic of events will, sooner or later, compel the trades' unions to become revolutionary. But let us hope that reason and manliness will forestall the fiercer logic, and that the unions will soon, of their own accord, waken up to the fact that sick-nursing is of secondary importance, and that the great work before them is to fight the battle of labour emancipation.

I hope my fellow unionists will not misunderstand me and think I am attacking trades' unionism from the ordinary point of view. I quite agree that men are rightly following their own interests in combining to keep up wages and to support their sick or distressed comrades. But something more than that is required. The very fact that friendly societies are necessary shows that the workers are dependents of their employers. The argument may be briefly stated thus: (1) Trades' unions are trying to gain justice for themselves under a system which

is built upon the injustice done towards them; (2) The only way to get justice is to abolish the system which renders injustice at once a possibility and a necessity; (3) That, owing to the decline of trade, the unions cannot maintain their present position, and that the further decline will present two alternatives—gradual but certain extinction, or a change of action which will make them a revolutionary body. The next question of course will be, What is the distinct aim and policy of such a body as the unions would then be? This I hope to answer in a future paper.

J. L. MAHON.

SOCIALISM FROM THE ROOT UP.

CHAPTER V.—PREPARING FOR REVOLUTION—ENGLAND.

THE English seventeenth century revolution was from the first purely middle-class, and as we hinted in our last it cast off most of its elements of enthusiasm and idealism in Cromwell's latter days; the burden of the more exalted Puritanism was felt heavily by the nation and no doubt played its part in the restoration of Monarchy; nor on the other hand was England at all ripe for Republicanism; and so between these two disgusts it allowed itself to be led back again into the arms of Monarchy by the military adventurers who had seized on the power which Cromwell once wielded. But this restoration of the Stuart monarchy was after all but a makeshift put up with because the defection from the high-strung principle of the earlier period of the revolution left nothing to take the place of Cromwell's absolutism. The nation was quite out of sympathy with the Court, which was un-national and Catholic in tendency and quite openly debauched. The nation itself though it had got rid of the severity of Puritanism was still Puritan, and welcomed the Sunday Act of Charles II. which gave the due legal stamp to Puritanism of the duller and more respectable kind. And though enthusiastic Puritanism was no longer dominant, it was not extinct. John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" shines out, though a religious romance, amidst the dulness of the literature of the time. The Quakers who represented in their beginning the peaceable and religious side of the Levellers, arose and grew and flourished in spite of persecution; the Cameronians in Scotland, as we mentioned in our last chapter, made an ineffectual armed resistance to the dying out of enthusiasm; while across the Atlantic the descendants of the earlier Puritans carried on an almost theocratic government, which, by the way be it said, persecuted the Quakers most cruelly. Little by little, however, all that was not quite commonplace and perfunctory, died out in English Protestantism, and respectable indifferentism had carried all before it by the end of the century. Politics and religion had no longer any real bond of union, and the religious side of Puritanism, Evangelicalism, disappears here, to come to light again in the next century under the leadership of Whitfield.

Yet, such as English Puritanism had become, its respectable, habitual, and formal residuum was strong enough to resent James the Second's Papistry, and to make its resentment felt; while at the same time the constitutionalism which began the anti-absolutist opposition in Charles the First's time, and which had been interrupted by Cromwell's iron and Charles the Second's mud absolutism, gathered head again and began to take definite form. The Stuart monarchy, with its "divine right" of absolute sovereignty, was driven from England in the person of James the Second, and a constitutional king was found in William of Orange, and constitutional party government began.

Thus, in spite of interruption, was carried out the middle-class revolution in England; like all other revolutions, it arrived at the point which it really set out to gain; but not until it had shaken off much which did at one time help forward its progress, and which was and still is mistaken for an essential part of it. Religious and Republican enthusiasm, although they (and especially the first) played their part in abolishing the reactionary clogs on the progress of the middle-classes, had to disappear as elements which would have marred the end proposed by that revolution; to wit, the creation of an all-powerful middle-class freed from all restrictions that would interfere with it in its pursuit of individual profit derived from the exploitation of industry.

Thenceforth, till our own times, respectable political life in England is wrapped up in Whiggery; tinged, indeed, on one side with the last faint remains of feudalism in the form of a quite unreal sentiment, involving no practical consequences but the acceptance of the name of Tory; and on the other by as faint a sentiment towards democracy, which was probably rather a traditional survival of the feeling of the old days of the struggle between King and Parliament, than any holding out of the hand towards the real democracy which was silently forming underneath the government of the respectables.

The first part of the eighteenth century, therefore, finds England solid and settled; all the old elements of disturbance and aspiration hardened into constitutional bureaucracy; religion recognised as a State formality, but having no influence whatever on the corporate life of the country, its sole reality a mere personal sentiment, not at all burdensome to the practical business of life. The embers of the absolutist re-action on the point of extinction, and swept off easily and even lazily when they make a show of being dangerous; the nobility a mere titled upper order of the bourgeoisie; the country prosperous, gaining on French and on Dutch in America and India, and beginning to found its colonial and foreign markets, and its navy beginning to be paramount on all seas; the working-classes better off than at any time since the fifteenth century. Art if not actually dead represented by a Court painter or so of ugly ladies and stupid gentlemen, and

literature by a few word-spinning essayists and prosaic versifiers, priding themselves on a well-bred contempt for whatever was manly, passionate, or elevating in the wealth of the past of their own language.

Here then in England we may begin to see what the extinction of feudality was to end in. Mediæval England is gone, the manners and ways of thought of the people are utterly changed; they are called English, but they are another people from that which dwelt in England when "forestalling and regratting" were misdemeaners; when the gild ruled over the production of goods and division of labour was not yet; when both in art and literature the people had their share,—nay, when what of both there was, was produced by the people themselves. Gone also is militant Puritanism, buried deep under mountains of cool formality. England is bourgeois and successful throughout its whole life; without aspirations, for its self-satisfaction is too complete for any, yet gathering force for development of a new kind,—as it were a nation taking breath for a new spring; for under its prosperous self-satisfaction lies the birth of a great change—a revolution in industry—and England is at the time we are writing of simply preparing herself for that change. Her prosperity and solid bureaucratic constitutional government—nay, even the commonplace conditions of life in the country, are enabling her to turn all her attention towards this change, and the development of the natural resources in which she is so rich. The fall of the feudal system, the invasion of the individualist method of producing goods, and of simple exchange of commodities, were bound to lead to the final development of the epoch—the rise of the great machine industries—and now the time for that development is at hand. The growing world-market is demanding more than the transitional methods of production can supply. In matters political prejudice is giving way to necessity, and all obstacles are being rapidly cleared away before the advent of a new epoch for labour; of which, indeed, we may say that if no great change were at hand for it in its turn, it would have been the greatest disaster which has ever happened to the race of man. In our next chapter we shall deal with the elements at work in preparing the transformation of the commercial system, for which this development of the great machine industry was so necessary and so mighty a servant.

E. BELFORD BAX AND WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

THE PEOPLE'S PRESS.

With an assumption born of ignorance, the bipeds of this earth claim to be civilised! Civilised! Oh, ye gods! Civilised, while millions drudge like slaves, and dwell like brutes! Civilised, while cant and hypocrisy reign supreme! Civilised, and yet in no less than three-quarters of a century nearly 5,000,000 men have lost their lives in brutal wars for the benefit of a brutal ruling class. Let us be modest and confess that we are only emerging from the barbarism of Darwin's monkeys.—*Paterson (N. J.) Labor Standard.*

On the farm of a friend in New Jersey a hundred bushels of potatoes rotted in the ground and as many apples on the trees, because they could not be sold for sufficient to pay the cost of handling. Thirty miles away, in Philadelphia—not to mention nearer places,—thousands of people are starving for the want of those potatoes and apples. Is it not the first business of government to bring food and hungry people together? And if it fails in this why should we tolerate it anyway?—*Labor Enquirer.*

It makes me "tired" to see so many labour papers go out of their way to insist that the demands of the labour movement must be brought about only by legal means, and frown down anything that in any way looks towards unlawfulness, no matter how unjust the "law" is. I say that, whenever there is a fair probability of success to do a right act, whether it be lawful or not, why, do it. I contend that our demands are just; that we propose to have our rights; that we will try all the peaceable means within our reach, and if we can't succeed that way will resort to revolutionary methods. This whining and making faces at the revolutionists is beneath the dignity of any one who is honestly and earnestly in this movement. It is simply doing the work of capitalism.—*J. A. Labadie, in Labor Leaf.*

In truth the Revolution cannot wait for the decision of those who hesitate, being slow to grasp the great fact of its coming. It is necessary for the worker to hold himself in readiness with firm and steady bearing, that he may not be as the tree torn from the soil and swept on by the torrent in its impetuous course down the mountain. The "grand industry" sweeps him up in its course; the machine, that great agent of the Revolution, and her precursor, announces already her approach, uttering in its low thunder, "You wretched proletariat, slaves of capital, like to the old serfs of the soil, behold! I was created by your intelligence and for your use, but your indifference and the inaction which has taken possession of you have caused me to fall into other hands with a quite different result from that aimed at in the invention of me. Tremble, then, before my anger!"—*El Socialismo.*

Labour-saving machinery has of late years made such gigantic strides in every branch of industry, that manual labour is being rapidly supplanted by sinews of steel and muscles of iron; and since science and invention are the common property of our race and not the exclusive inheritance of the few, it is only just between man and man, that all should alike share the relief and blessings which they bring. So far, however, all those blessings have been quietly pocketed by monopolists and employers of labour, while, as J. S. Mill assures us, "It is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being." We maintain, therefore, that the industrial classes should rise like one man in self-defence and demand that the hours of labour should be reduced from time to time, in the same proportion as machinery supplements manual labour in the production of wealth. If the hours of toil are not reduced to protect the industrial classes, a system of land monopoly assisted by labour-saving machinery must, sooner or later, in every country, starve the great majority to fatten the few, and it is simply amazing that labour has not long since rebelled against such a flagrant injustice.—*New Zealand Watchman.*

THE PALACE OF ICE.

(By FERDINAND FREILIGRATH. Translated by J. L. JOYNES.)

Ye all, I well suppose, have heard of that enormous icy dome,
Where o'er the frozen Neva's flood there rose a house of frozen foam.
A Royal Russian woman's whim compelled her slaves to pile it high:
Tier over tier of solid ice the frost-bound folly faced the sky.

Against the polished panes without the wintry wind blew cold as death,
But balmy zephyrs breathed within their warm spring-scented flowery
breath;
Sweet music stole about the courts, bright lamps of crystal gleamed and
glanced,
And o'er the floors of spacious halls the high-born merry-makers danced.

Thus till the days of midmost March the wondering folk that palace saw;
But e'en in Russia comes a spring, and even Neva's icebergs thaw.
Hark! echoing louder than the loud South-western storm resounds the cra
As headlong in the weltering flood the myriad sparkling fragments flash.

The waves in triumph clap their hands—so tightly bound in frost before—
The angry waves that yesternight a court and all its folly bore,
That suffered all the pomp of state above their heads to flaunt or frown,
And meek and mild allowed a queen beneath her feet to tread them down.

Now Neva claps her hands indeed! Right onward through the solid snow
Right onward through the blocks of ice her furious waters foaming go;
Blot out all traces of her shame, and then, rejoicing to be free,
Flow on in majesty and peace to mix with the eternal sea.

Ye who would fetter Freedom's flood, and dam her torrent back by force—
Like Neva she will burst her bonds, and rush resistless on her course;
Will break the yoke she bore so long, dissolve her fetters in a trice,
And whelm beneath her whirling waves the despot's royal dome of ice.

Full well ye prank it in your pride, or do your secret deeds of shame,
As if the iceberg never thawed, as if no spring-time ever came:
But see! the sun mounts slowly up; warm zephyrs whisper through t
land;
Your ceiling drips; your palace swims; the floor is floating where ye stand

Oh fools, that fain o'erwhelmed would be! Ye prate and strive to make i
plain
To yonder melting slab of ice its duty is to freeze again.
Good sirs, 'tis vain; your time is up! Your prate will not put back the sun:
The ice must crash and disappear when once the thaw is well begun.

Another Neva claps her hands! Right onward through the solid snow,
Right onward through the blocks of ice her furious waters foaming go;
Blot out all traces of her shame, and then, rejoicing to be free,
Flow on in majesty and might to mix with the eternal sea.

DICTIONARY FOR WORKING-MEN.

- Bee*—A stinging satire on human civilisation.
Capital—A subject which labouring-men must not talk about.
Charity—The remorse of selfishness.
Commerce—The Robin Hood of respectability, who takes from the poor to give to the rich.
Competition—A struggle in which millions are trampled to death that thousands may mount on their bodies.
Emigration—A quack medicine, prescribed for the cure of discontent.
Labour—A mouse invented as a plaything to a cat. Capital is the cat.
—— A corn-field, where thieves get the harvest and the owner gets the gleanings.
Luxury—The rich cream taken by the few from the skim-milk allotted to the many.
Money—The largest slave-holder in the world.
Organisation—A conspiracy on the part of working-men to better their condition.
Party—An organisation to humbug the poor voter, run by wire-pullers in the interest of the monied men.
Pauper—A skeleton left by the wolves after feeding.
Political platform—A lot of planks covered with molasses to catch flies.
Poverty—The Siberian mine wherein slaves dig out wealth for their masters.
Prison—The grave where state-doctors bury their murdered patients.
—— An oven, where society puts newly-made crime to harden.
Shop—The bellows of the industrial organ, the blower of which is paid better than the artist who executes the composition.
—— A narrow sandy channel for wealth to pass through, which absorb much and partially distributes the rest.
Socialism—A word used to keep men from studying the labour question.
Statesman—A man who might improve his time by studying the problem of human welfare, but who generally studies the interest of the men and clique who put him into office.
Taxes—Feathers plucked from all birds to line the nests of a few.
Tyranny—Knocking people on to their knees for the crime of standing upright.
Wages—A collar round the neck of modern serfs, by which they proclaim their independence.
—— Food for cows between milking times.
—— Gold-dust thrown by capital in the eyes of labour.
Wealth—Something which most people want, but of which those who create the most get the least share.

The fact is, as individualism suppresses individuality, so nationalism suppresses all that is worth keeping in the special elements which go to make up a real and not an artificial nation. The sham community of the present—the nation—is formed for purposes of rivalry only, and consequently suppresses all minor differences that do not help it to supremacy over other nations. The true community of the future will be formed for livelihood and the development of all human capacities, and consequently would avail itself of the varieties of temperament caused by differences of surroundings which differentiate the races and families of mankind.—W. M.